

ABORTION, INFANTICIDE, KILLING THE OLD 325

common to all the tribes which roamed the prairies. Ever⁷
one who lived
to decrepitude knew that he must expect it. A more recent
authority says
that Poncas and Omahas never left the aged and infirm
on the prairie.
They were left at home, with adequate supplies, until the
hunting party
returned.¹ That shows that they had a settled home and
their cornfields
are mentioned in the context. The old watched the
cornfields, so that
they were of some use. By the law of the Incas the old,
who were unfit
for other work, drove birds from the fields, and they were
kept at public
cost, like the disabled.² The Hudson's Bay Eskimo strangle
the old who
are dependent on others for their food, or leave them to
perish when the
camp is moved. They move in order to get rid of
burdensome old people
without executing them.³ The central Eskimo kill the old
because all
who die by violence go to the happy land; others have not
such a happy
future.⁴ Nansen⁵ says that "when people get so old that they
cannot take
care of themselves, especially women, they are often treated
with little
consideration" by the Eskimo. Many tribes' in Brazil
killed the old
because they were a burden and because they could no
longer enjoy war,
hunting, and feasting. The Tupis sometimes killed a sick
man and ate the
corpse, if the shaman said that he could not get well.⁶ The
Tobas, a Guy-
kuru tribe in Paraguay, bury the old alive. The old, from pain
and decrepi-
tude, often beg for death. Women execute the homicide.⁷
An old woman
of the Murray River people, Australia, broke her hip. She
was left to die,
« as the tribe did not want to be bothered with her." The
helpless and infirm
are customarily so treated.⁸ In West Victoria the old are
strangled by a
relative deputed for the purpose and the body is burned.
One reason given
is that, in cases of attack by an enemy, the old would be
captured and
tortured to death. The victims often beg for delay, but
always in vain.⁹
The Melanesians buried alive the sick and old. " It is
certain that, when
this was done, there was generally a kindness intended."
Even when the
younger hastened the end, for selfish reasons, the sick and
aged acquiesced.
They often begged to be put out of their misery.¹⁰ On the
Easter Islands
the aged were treated with little respect. The sick were not
kindly treated,

unless they were near relatives.¹¹ The Solomon Islanders are described as "a community where no respect whatever is shown by youth to age."¹² Holub¹⁵ mentions a great cliff from which some South African tribes cast the old when tired of caring for them. Hottentots used to put decrepit old people on pack oxen and take them out into the desert, where they were

¹ *Bur. Eth.*, III, 274.

⁷ *Globus*, LXXXI, 108.

² Martius, *Ethnog. Brazil.*, 126, n. 321.

⁸ Eyre, *Cent. Australia*, I,

⁸ *Bur. Eth.*, XI, 178, 186. 62.

⁹ Dawson, *West Victoria*,

⁴ *Ibid.*, VI, 615. 347.

¹⁰ Codrington, *Melanesians*,

⁵ *Eskimo*, 178.

ⁿ Geiseler, *Oster-inseln*, 31.

⁶ Martius, *Ethnog. Bras.*, 126. 25.

^{**} Woodford, *Head-hunters*,

¹³ *Sieben Jahre in S. Afr.*, I, 409.